

**June 3, 2009**

For link to video, click [here](#).

Thank you, Madame Speaker.

I rise today to bring attention to the many small business owners and employees in New Jersey and across this country who cannot afford health insurance.

Small businesses are the backbone of our local communities and economies.

But small business owners are struggling to make ends meet under the weight of their health insurance costs.

And the price just keeps rising.

I know this struggle personally. My father owned and operated a small business - a dry cleaning business.

My dad lost his business after suffering multiple heart attacks without health insurance.

He worked hard, and supported his family, but the price of insurance was just too high.

Over 30 years later, more and more families in New Jersey are still feeling the same pinch.

From 2000 to 2007, health insurance premiums in New Jersey increased by 71 percent while median yearly wages increased only 15 percent.

And more than 28 percent of individuals working for small businesses are living without health insurance.

I hear from small business owners in Burlington and Ocean Counties almost every day.

They want to provide health insurance for themselves, their families, and their employees.

They just can't afford it.

That's why I am proud to join a bipartisan group of legislators supporting the Small Business Health Options Program or SHOP Act.

The SHOP Act will allow small businesses to pool their resources and find the best options to meet the needs of their employees.

Like larger companies, small business owners will have more choices and an opportunity to negotiate lower prices, to keep their businesses strong and profitable.

By supporting the SHOP Act, Democrats and Republicans are coming together to grow the economy and put people back to work.

Small business owners across this country, like those in Burlington and Ocean Counties, and in Cherry Hill, are the driving force behind our economic recovery.

Let's support their hard work and entrepreneurial spirit.

I yield back the balance of my time.